

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 GABORO 00906 031548Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 SS-15 SP-02 INR-10

NSC-05 CIAE-00 /068 W

-----086261 040033Z /75R

R 031310Z APR 78

FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1916

INFO AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMCONSUL CAPETOWN

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

S E C R E T GABORONE 0906

NORORN

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGEN, MOPS, BC, RH

SUBJECT: RHODESIA: DEFINITIVE GOB VERSION OF KAZUNGULA SHOOTOUT

REF: (A) STATE 65681, (B) GABORONE 739 AND PREVIOUS

1. SUMMARY: DURING MARCH 30 CONVERSATION WITH CABINET SECRETARY STEENKAMP ON A NUMBER OF TOPICS, DCM ASKED HIM WHETHER BDF IS IN HABIT OF TRANSPORTING DISARMED GUERRILLAS, EITHER TO ZAMBIA BORDER (AS CLAIMED BY GOB FIRST SECRETARY MPOFU IN PARA. 4, REF A) OR TO FRANCISTOWN/SELEBI-PIKWE TRANSIT CAMPS. STEENKAMP REPLIED THAT ANY GUERRILLAS APPREHENDED AND DISARMED BY BDF WERE ALWAYS TAKEN TO TRANSIT CAMPS FOR FIRST AVAILABLE FLIGHT NORTH TO LUSAKA. HE THEN PROCEEDED TO DESCRIBE THE EVENTS BEFORE AND AFTER KAZUNGULA SHOOTOUT IN SOME DETAIL, MUCH OF IT NEW TO US. END

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 GABORO 00906 031548Z

SUMMARY.

2. ON THE MORNING OF THE SHOOTOUT, STEENKAMP SAID, THE GUERRILLA BAND HAD SHOT UP A RHODESIAN SECURITY FORCE TROOP CARRIER, KILLING 16. KNOWING THEY WOULD BE PURSUED, THEY CROSSED INTO BOTSWANA TELLING THE INHABITANTS OF A VILLAGE NEAR THE BORDER THAT THEY

EXPECTED RHODESIAN RETALIATORY REACTION AND THAT THE VILLAGERS SHOULD FLEE TO THE BUSH. WHEN THE BDF, IN RESPONSE TO REPORTS OF SIGHTINGS OF WHITE RHODESIAN TROOPS, ARRIVED NEAR THE VILLAGE, THEY SPOTTED SMOKE COMING FROM THE BUSH. INVESTIGATING, THEY CAME ACROSS A GUERRILLA CAMP AND CAPTURED TWO ZAPU GUERRILLAS, THE REST HAVING TAKEN TO THE BUSH. THEY ALSO CAPTURED A NUMBER OF WEAPONS, INCLUDING A BAZOOKA-TYPE ARM AND A LARGE QUANTITY OF AMMUNITION. THE BDF THEN LOADED THE TWO DISARMED GUERRILLAS AND THE CAPTURED EQUIPMENT ABOARD THE LAND ROVER. THEY PROCEEDED TOWARD KAZUNGULA WHERE THEY INTENDED TO INTERN THE TWO GUERRILLAS OVER NIGHT AT THE POLICE STATION UNTIL THEY COULD BE SHIPPED TO FRANCISTOWN THE FOLLOWING DAY. ON THE WAY, AS WE KNOW, THEY RAN INTO THE RHODESIAN AMBUSH. THE FOLLOWING DAY, WHEN THE BDF AND GOB OFFICIALS WENT TO THE SITE TO RECLAIM THE BODIES, THEY TOOK THE PRECAUTION OF PARKING THEIR VEHICLES SOME DISTANCE AWAY AND GOING THROUGH THE BUSH. ENROUTE THEY DISCOVERED THE SITE OF A SECOND (UNUSED) RHODESIAN AMBUSH.

3. STEENKAMP SAID HE HAS NO DOUBTS WHATSOEVER THAT THE RSF HAD ANY ILLUSIONS ABOUT WHAT THEY WERE DOING. HE SAID FROM THEIR VANTAGE POINT IT- SHOULD HAVE BEEN VERY OBVIOUS THAT THE BDF HAD ARRESTED AND DISARMED
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 GABORO 00906 031548Z

THE GUERRILLAS. HE BELIEVES THAT RHODESIAN TEMPER WERE RUNNING SO HIGH THAT THEY WERE WILLING TO KILL ALL THE BDF PATROL IN ORDER TO ACCOUNT FOR THE TWO CAPTURED GUERRILLAS. (AS IT TURNED OUT, THE TWO CIVILIANS KILLED IN THE SHOOTOUT WERE ONE OF THE GUERRILLAS AND ONE OF THE BOYS WHO HAD ORIGINALLY REPORTED THE PRESENCE OF RHODESIAN TROOPS.)

4. STEENKAMP SAID THE GOB'S INITIAL COMMUNIQUE CONCERNING THE KAZUNGULA SHOOTOUT WAS BASED ON WHAT WAS AT THE TIME CONSIDERED TO BE ACCURATE INFORMATION (I.E. THAT THE BDF HAD HAD NO CONTACT WITH GUERRILLAS). THERE WAS LITTLE TIME AVAILABLE TO CHECK THE FACTS AS PRESSURE WAS ON GOB TO ISSUE A TIMELY STATEMENT. SUBSEQUENTLY, IT WAS LEARNED THAT THE ORIGINAL POLICE REPORT HAD BEEN IN ERROR AND THAT IN FACT THE TWO DISARMED GUERRILLAS WERE TRAVELLING IN THE BDF VEHICLES AT THE TIME OF THE AMBUSH. THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE DISCUSSION WITHIN THE GOB WHETHER A SUBSEQUENT CORRECTION SHOULD BE ISSUED TO THE FIRST COMMUNIQUE; IT WAS DECIDED THAT SUCH ACTION WOULD LEAVE THE GOB OPEN TO RHODESIAN CHARGES OF FALSIFYING

OR DISTORTING INFORMATION AND THAT IT WAS BETTER TO
LEAVE WELL ENOUGH ALONE.

5. STEENKAMP REQUESTED THAT THE ABOVE INFORMATION,
PARTICULARLY CONCERNING THE PRESENCE OF GUERRILLAS
IN THE BDF VEHICLES, BE KEPT STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL
IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT GOB HAD DECIDED NOT TO RELEASE
IT PUBLICLY.

6. COMMENT: STEENKAMP'S VERSION OF THE KAZUNGULA
EVENTS SEEMS TO ACCORD MORE CLOSELY WITH THE HAWKINS
VERSION AS REPORTED IN REF B. THERE IS NOTHING IN
WHAT WE WERE TOLD BY STEENKAMP WHICH WOULD NEGATE OUR
ANALYSIS GIVEN IN REF B; ON THE CONTRARY, IT WOULD SEEM
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 GABORO 00906 031548Z

TO BEAR OUT JUDGMENT THAT THE RSF TENDS TO CONSIDER
TRANSPORTATION OF DISARMED GUERRILLAS AS A FORM OF
COLLABORATION WHICH, IF THE SITUATION DEMANDS IT, IS
SEEN TO JUSTIFY ARMED ACTION AGAINST THE BDF. IF SO,
STEENKAMP'S FEELING THAT THE RHODESIANS ARE UNREPENTANT
AND QUITE LIKELY TO ENGAGE IN FURTHER AGREESION
AGAINST THE BDF UNDER SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES, APPEARS
TO BE WELL MERITED.
NORLAND

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: BORDER INCIDENTS, COMBAT OPERATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978GABORO00906
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780144-0278
Format: TEL
From: GABORONE
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t197804100/aaaadhbb.tel
Line Count: 145
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: de4db2a5-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: NOFORN
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NOFORN
Reference: 78 STATE 65681, 78 GABORONE 739
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2818156
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RHODESIA: DEFINITIVE GOB VERSION OF KAZUNGULA SHOOTOUT
TAGS: OGEN, MOPS, PBOR, BC, RH
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/de4db2a5-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014